# EXCLerator Project

## Women & Diversity in Executive and Community Leadership

This 2017 report is the second installment of the Women & Diversity EXCLerator Project, the first comprehensive investigation into diverse leadership representation in Hamilton and Halton. This report analyzes findings against our initial 2014 benchmark data, allowing us to evaluate progress and identify setbacks in women's leadership trajectories across nine employment sectors.

The 2017 EXCLerator project expands the scope in two key ways. First, this edition quantifies the racial diversity of Hamilton and Halton's top leadership. Second, it adds a 'youth sector' to gain insight into the diversity of the regions' youngest leaders. These additions are critical to understanding the differing experiences of 'diverse' leaders beyond the gender facet, and as well as assessing the state of the leadership pipeline and activism in the struggle for gender and racial equity.
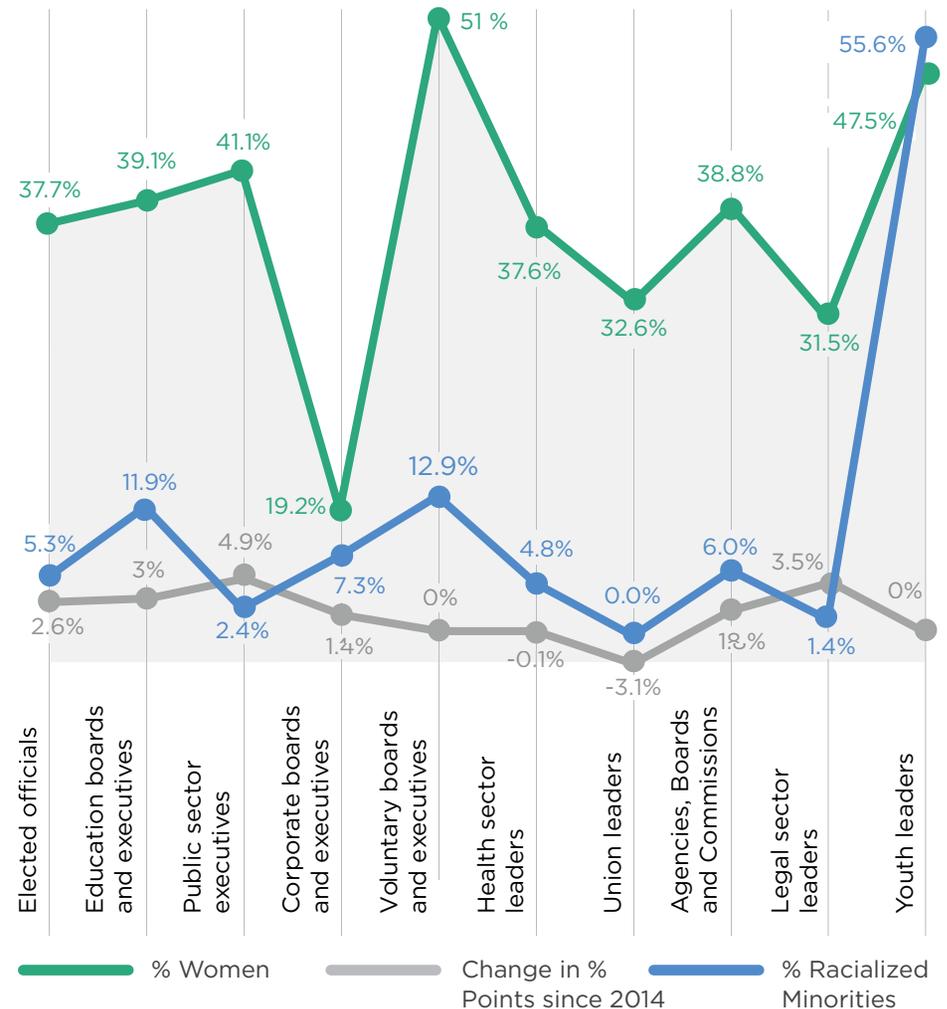
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# WHY FOCUS ON DIVERSITY IN LOCAL LEADERSHIP?

Diversity in leadership is an issue of intrinsic fairness, with benefits that are widespread. **First**, there is symbolic significance when leaders reflect the complex diversity of their communities, which can help to erode stereotypes, open minds, and energize those who have been historically marginalized. **Second**, diversity in leadership fosters community trust in local institutions and organizations, while also enhancing service delivery. Institutions and organizations with diversity in leadership, especially those working for the community's wellbeing, are more responsive and better equipped to serve their communities' diverse needs. **Third**, diversity in leadership remains instrumental in enhancing democratic decision-making by expanding the range of voices included in debate and decision-making positions, ultimately leading to more creative and innovative solutions.

# THREE REASONS WHY WE NEED DIVERSITY IN LOCAL LEADERSHIP

1. Drive innovation and equitable growth: 'Diverse' leaders are Hamilton and Halton's top talent. Women represent more than 50% of the population and as of 2016 racialized people represent 19.0% and 25.3%, respectively; their education, skill, and experiences are needed to move our region forward;
2. Build community trust in local institutions, and better engage those institutions to serve diverse needs;
3. Produce better democratic outcomes and better business and decision-making results for firms and institutions.

# KEY FINDINGS



Legend:
- % Women (green)
- Change in % Points since 2014 (grey)
- % Racialized Minorities (blue)

Chart data by category:

| Category | % Women | % Racialized Minorities | Change in % Points |
|---|---|---|---|
| Elected officials | 37.7% | 5.3% | 2.6% |
| Education boards and executives | 39.1% | 11.9% | 3% |
| Public sector executives | 41.1% | 2.4% | 4.9% |
| Corporate boards and executives | 19.2% | 7.3% | 1.4% |
| Voluntary boards and executives | 51% | 12.9% | 0% |
| Health sector leaders | 37.6% | 4.8% | -0.1% |
| Union leaders | 32.6% | 0.0% | -3.1% |
| Agencies, Boards and Commissions | 38.8% | 6.0% | 1.8% |
| Legal sector leaders | 31.5% | 1.4% | 3.5% |
| Youth leaders | 47.5% / 55.6% | 55.6% | 0% |

## CHANGE IN PERCENTAGE POINTS SINCE 2014

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| +2.6 | Elected officials | -0.1 | Health sector leaders |
| +3.0 | Education boards | -3.1 | Union leaders |
| +4.9 | Public sector executives | +1.8 | Agencies, Boards and Commissions (ABCs) |
| +1.4 | Corporate boards and executives | +3.5 | Legal sector leaders |
| No change | Voluntary boards and executives | n/a | Youth leaders |

# WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

> Women and racial minorities are slightly better represented in leadership positions in Halton, compared to Hamilton;
> Despite some progress, women remain underrepresented in leadership across virtually all employment sectors in our two municipalities;
> Women are best represented in the Voluntary sector, and the least represented in the Corporate sector;
> Local leadership is severely lacking in racial diversity:
  > Visible minorities fare particularly poorly in the Legal, Public, and Health sectors, and perform best in the Voluntary and Education sectors;
  > Important sub-sector differences in representation are worth noting; for example, while overall representation of visible minorities in the elected sector is low at 5.3%, visible minorities make up 11.1% of federal and provincial elected positions;
> Many organizations, firms, and employers do not collect and release information on the racial diversity of their employees and leaders. This signals a lack of commitment to addressing structural barriers and obscures the ability of researchers to capture the state of whiteness in local leadership.

# RECOMMENDATIONS
## MOVING FORWARD

> **Acknowledge that seen and unseen racial bias and gender-based discrimination exist** in Hamilton and Halton, and that these forces impact who has the opportunity to lead across sectors;

> **Measure and track transparently:** Organizations must set targets and analyze their progress openly in order to achieve change: at the least, a photographic snapshot of who holds top positions within the organization is needed to ensure accountability;
> **Learn from top performers:** Several sectors including Voluntary, Public, and Youth are achieving excellent representation with regards to gender. Replicating their recruitment and retention practices can help other sectors meet their targets;
> **Diversify to attract top youth talent:** Parity in gender and racial representation sets the tone for what this generation expects from their employers, local businesses, and service providers. Organizations must make diversity and inclusion a clear part of their organizational recruitment strategy to signal their commitment and attract this generation's top leadership talent;
> **Understand and communicate the business case for diversity:** Top performers know that diverse leadership drives better decision making and business outcomes. Senior leaders must communicate this proven research throughout the value chain to start the conversation around diversity and inclusion;
> **Ally with Hamilton and Halton's "Community Assets" to diversify and make inclusion a long-term strategy:** Our region is packed with community organizations that are making waves, sharing best practices, and providing resources to help top organizations connect to top talent. See *Community Assets* in this report for more information.

## WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

> There is no one actor or segment of the population solely responsible for ensuring diversity in leadership; eradicating barriers to inclusive leadership is a community-wide problem, and demands that all levels of the community respond;

> At the **grass-roots level**, existing community groups and voluntary organizations are well-equipped with knowledge of their communities' needs and pressing concerns. Using this kind of situated knowledge, organizations can continue to pressure and lobby for change in policies and laws, influencing the policy priorities and debate of elected officials;

> At **the meso-level**, employers, corporations, and organizations must acknowledge and strategically rectify latent biases in workplace attitudes and culture, and more tangible biases in workplace policies, hiring practices, and promotional procedures:

> > **Employers and organizations** also must be transparent to the cities in which they operate by collecting and releasing up-to-date information on the demographics of their leaders as a matter of accountability to their communities;

> > In particular, **the corporate sector** must acknowledge that it remains the most laggard in terms of diversity in leadership, and will likely need to take more onerous steps in addressing this lack of inclusivity.

> At the **governmental and public level**, officials must continue to enact policies that mandate and monitor diversity in hiring and promotional procedures, especially where diversity is most lacking:

> This may include **mandatory quotas** for poor performing industries. Quotas systems can be effective in ensuring that qualified women and visible minorities get a seat at the table. Over time, discriminatory attitudes about women and visible minorities can be challenged and changed as their representation in leadership becomes normalized and accepted;

> Governments must illustrate their commitment to diversity and inclusivity by **allocating larger portions of their budgets** to community and voluntary organizations that are currently leading the way in diverse leadership.

> Despite the necessity for action at all levels of the community, solutions should not become overly compartmentalized, inward-oriented, and unreflective. Organizations, institutions, employers, and community leaders must look for **partnerships, joint-ventures, and creative collaborations** with each other, even when these do not seem readily apparent.

## NOW, LET'S START A CONVERSATION!

As part of the EXCLerator Project, we also point readers to a short film that traces a young woman's career trajectory as she navigates the seen and unseen challenges that shape her success. Let's acknowledge and start a conversation about the obstacles women and diverse candidates face and the compromises they often make as they progress along their career path.

You can view our video here: **goo.gl/BhdHQn**

**EXCLERATOR:** WOMEN & DIVERSITY IN EXECUTIVE AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP